

A Short History of Education in West Virginia

By Roy C. Woods

In the territory included in West Virginia, there were few schools before the beginning of the nineteenth century. In that section of Virginia lying east of the Alleghenies, a number of educational institutions were in existence. West of the mountains, the country was largely a sparsely settled wilderness. The time of the early settlers had been fully occupied in gaining a living for themselves and their families, and in this work, many dangers and difficulties had been encountered. The fierce warriors of the Delaware and Iroquois tribes had disputed the right of the white man to the possession of the land, and in the early history of the territory, many battles were fought. Bands of Indians roved the woods, burning cabins, destroying crops, and killing and scalping settlers wherever they could.

Very little is known concerning education of these early years. Too much time was needed for clearing away forests, building of homes, and resisting the deadly attacks of the fierce red men, to think much about education. In all probability the only attempts at education during the first few years were confined to training in the home.

The following lines taken from George Atkinson's biographical sketch of Greenbury Slack bears out the contention regarding this early home training. Concerning Slack, who was born in Kanawha County in 1807, it was said:¹

There was no public schools in those days and being poor, he was not able to attend the private or select schools, which were taught only in the towns and villages. These barriers, however, did not keep him from carrying out the resolution which he had made in early life, that he would educate himself, if he had to do so at home, without an instructor. He therefore, procured a stock of textbooks, and started out in the pursuit of knowledge. In this way he spent all his time, except when he was required to work upon his father's farm. His progress was astonishing to both himself and his friends. He mastered the rudiments of the English language—in fact,

¹ George W. Atkinson, *History of Kanawha County* (Charleston: Office of the West Virginia Journal, 1874), p. 300. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1874, in the office of the Library of Congress, at Washington, D. C.

in a few years became a good grammarian and from the first displayed unusual talents as a mathematician.

It seems probable that "the charity schools" had scarcely any existence west of the Blue Ridge. A few, however, appear to have been opened in Berkeley, Hampshire, and some of the more western counties as they were then called. Private and select schools did gain a foothold in the state and did good work, in the education of the children of the people who were able and willing to pay tuition. The common primary schools seemed to gain the ascendancy among the mountaineer pioneer. Under the name of "old field schools," they had an illustrious history extending back nearly a hundred years.

Although the Virginia Assembly lacked Constitutional authority, it passed what is known as the Aldermanic School Law on December 26, 1796. Its preamble voiced current educational ideals as follows:

"... The great advantages which civilized and polished nations appear to enjoy, beyond the savage and barbarous nations of the world, are principally derived from the invention and use of letters, by means whereof the knowledge and experience of past days are recorded and transmitted, so that man, availing himself in succession of the accumulated wisdom and discoveries of his predecessors, is enabled more successfully to pursue and improve not only those acts which contribute to the support, convenience and ornament of life, but to those also which tend to illumine and ennoble his understanding and his nature. . . . If the minds of the citizens be not rendered liberal and humane, and be not fully impressed with the importance of the principles from which these blessings proceed, there can be no real stability or lasting permanency of the liberty, justice and order of a republican government."

By this law "three of their most honest and able men" in each county were to be designated or appointed as alderman. They were to choose a site, erect a schoolhouse, select the teacher, and "visit the school once every year at least." They were to examine the pupils, superintend the teacher's conduct, and see that "there shall be taught reading, writing, and common arithmetic; and all free children, male and female . . . shall be entitled to receive tuition gratis, for the term of three years; and as much longer at private expense, as their parents, guardians, or friends shall think proper." It is interesting to

note that the expenses were to be collected by the sheriff as other public taxes are collected, and from each inhabitant in proportion to their public assessments and county levies. The law went into effect in January, 1797, and was the first school law operative in the ten counties then organized in what is now West Virginia. It is not known how many of these counties obeyed the law, but it is fair to assume that some did.

The Acts of 1809 provided "that all escheats, confiscations, forfeitures, and all personal property accruing to the Commonwealth as derelict and having no rightful owner . . . and all militia fines . . . are hereby appropriated to the encouragement of learning." This was the "Literary Fund" around which clusters much educational history of the two states. The Assembly even went so far as to register a solemn "protest against any other application of the said fund by any succeeding General Assembly to any other object than the education of the poor." This fund was later increased by the addition of other monies, among which were the re-payment by the Federal Government of the loans made by Virginia during the War of 1812. The Court in each county was empowered to appoint from five to fifteen "descreet" persons who served as "school commissioners," and were to administer the part of the funds designated for their county. They determined the number, selected the children who were to be recipients of this benefit, and could draw from this fund for all expenses including tuition, proper books, and materials.

The earliest reference to a schoolhouse discovered was found in "an entry in the journal of George Washington, when in 1747 he surveyed lands for Lord Fairfax on the Upper Potomac, and in the South Branch, Cacapon and Patterson Creek Valleys. On the 18th of August of that year, he surveyed a tract by beginning at a station in 'the School House Old Field'. But no stream, or other objectives mentioned by which this location, can be determined, nor can this be done by any contemporary surveys. It is believed to be far up the South Branch Valley at what is known as the 'Indian Old Field' in Hardy County." Christopher Gist,¹ who was at Letart Falls in 1751, also mentioned in his surveys Old Field Schools.

¹ School Survey Book of Minutes in office of the County Board of Education at Ford Plummer, West Virginia. Book not paged. Quoted by McGinnis, unpublished Master's thesis, Marshall College, Huntington, West Virginia, 1946, p. 4.

The Old Field schools were the outgrowth of community cooperation for the purpose of educating its children. These schools were established on some spot—usually a worn-out and deserted field—convenient to all the children in the neighborhood. The teacher was employed by the community and was paid by a fee collected from parents. The establishment and control of such schools was in the hands of the local community, and was separate from either church or state. The frontiersmen, usually worked the cost out with their own hands; but they could be defrayed by taxation.

J. E. Norris, "the historian of the Shenandoah Valley," stated:

There was a certain stigma attached to these lower schools, not alone for the contact with poor children, whose rude manners may have been entailed on them by an idle and dissolute father, or worthless mother, but from the innate Virginia idea of independence; the sense of not being dependent upon their fellowmen or the State, for material support or assistance, especially in the matter of the education of their children.

Lewis felt that this stigma

. . . produced much of the illiteracy of the Commonwealth. But a large part of the people patronized these schools and when the three years' *tuition gratis* were passed, paid tuition and kept their children in school. Very many . . . were unable to do this . . . and the three years of free school afforded, gave but scant opportunity for the education of their children who thus grew up in ignorance if not illiteracy. It was to meet these conditions that the Literary Fund was created, and it became a mighty educational factor despite the refusal to accept its opportunities by so many of those for whom it was intended.³

Mason County⁴ had its share of those Old Field schools. The most noted one above Point Pleasant was the Old Field School Mitchell, established in 1780, located somewhere near or within the general chemicals and West Virginia Ordnance Companies reservation.

By 1833 there were twenty-four West Virginia counties formed, and many of these counties' schools had operated un-

³ Virgil A. Lewis, *History of West Virginia* (Philadelphia: Hubbard Brothers, 1886).

⁴ Record Book C of Mason County. Book not paged. Quoted by J. R. McCune. *Op. cit.*, p. 2.

der the Aldermanic School Law. The three years' free tuition continued to be maintained under the system, and, although the free provisions applied only to the poor, thousands of others received education at their own expense.⁵

The problem of illiteracy received much attention through a series of conventions held between 1841 and 1845, culminating in an act passed by the Virginia Assembly in 1846 giving school commissioners, holding office under the act of 1817, authority to supplement the state aid for the poor by local taxes. Callahan⁶ listed the main provisions of this law as follows:

. . . the school commissioners then in office should divide the county into precincts, each containing as many districts as was thought desirable, each district, however, containing a sufficient number of people to make up a school. Annually, each precinct was to elect a commissioner, who met with the other commissioners to form a county board of school commissioners. In each district three trustees were to be appointed, who were to be responsible for choosing the sites of the school buildings, seeing to the upkeep of the buildings, grounds, school apparatus, etc. Teachers were to be approved and hired by the board. The schools were to be visited regularly by the board of trustees. The latter were to make reports of the condition of their schools annually, to the Board of Commissioners . . .

Funds for the maintenance of these schools were supplied from the Literary Fund, and also by the inhabitants of each county by a uniform rate of taxation collected as were other taxes. . . .

Free public schools were established under the Act of 1846 in four counties: Cabell, Wayne, Jefferson, and Kanawha. The main features of the "old system" were maintained in the other counties. Funds continued to be administered as doles to the poor, and "old fields" continued to be good enough sites for school buildings, but this was a step forward in establishing the idea of a free public school system as a part of the state's obligations to the people.

The plan of this law was to place the management of schools in the hands of three county officials, called "alderman," who had authority to divide the county into districts, and to levy

⁵ Thomas C. Miller, *A History of Education in West Virginia* (Charleston 1907), p. 21.
⁶ James Martin Callahan, *History of West Virginia* (Chicago: The American Historical Society, Inc., 1902), Vol. 1, p. 202.

and collect taxes for the purpose of building and maintaining schools. The law was not very successful, largely because the wealthier aldermen felt they had to bear too much of the financial load and did not exert the initiative they might have done otherwise. Though not enforced effectively, the Aldermanic School Law was not repealed.

Presaging a "Free School System for the Commonwealth in which all children should be educated without distinction," the Clarksburg Convention was called in September, 1841. It was attended by delegates from nineteen counties of Virginia, of which sixteen were in the present boundaries of West Virginia. Lewis stated that "never did a more earnest body of men assemble in West Virginia than this, nor has the work of any one yielded more abundant fruit." They published a pamphlet of proceedings entitled "A Memorial to the General Assembly of the State, Requesting that Body to Establish a More Liberal and Efficient Primary or Common School System." Lewis called this "the most remarkable publication to be found in the educational literature of the Virginias."

Many prominent citizens sent communications. That from Judge Edwin S. Duncan, of Harrison County, was typical. In part, it said:

A splendid university has been endowed accessible only to the sons of the wealthy planters of the eastern part of the state and to the southern states. I have heard of only two students attending it from the north-west. The resources to the Literary Fund are frittered away in the endowment of an institution whose tendencies are essentially aristocratic and beneficial only to the very rich. . . . The men of small farms are left to their own means of educating their children. They cannot send them to the university, and they are prohibited, if they would, from joining in the annual donation to the poor (which is scattered in the) ostentatious manner of a nabob who throws small change among the paupers and cries, "catch who can."⁷

From 1833 and 1846 educational matters remained largely in a static condition while operating under the Aldermanic Act. An attempt was made in March, 1846, to remedy the situation, but the resulting act was merely a continuance of the old system in a new cloak. The clouds of Civil War were

⁷ Charles Henry Ashlar, *West Virginia, The Mountain State* (New York: Fowles-Dall, Inc., 1901), p. 202.

gathering, and no effectual progress was made until after the new state had been formed.

The first legislature under the first constitution met in Wheeling, June 20, 1863. The message of the first governor,⁸ Arthur I. Boreman, to the Legislature contained the following in regard to schools.

I call your especial attention to Article X of the Constitution requiring the Legislature to provide as soon as practicable for the establishment of a thorough and efficient system of schools. Ample power is given to provide funds and to pass all laws necessary for the purpose, and I trust you will take such action as will result in the organization of a thorough and efficient system as soon as the conditions of this country are such as to make it practicable.

On the 23rd of July, 1863, Mr. John W. Atkinson in the Senate, and on the 26th of September, 1863, Mr. A. F. Ross in the House, reported each a different bill for the establishment of a free school system, and during almost three months these bills underwent critical discussion.

On the 10th of December, 1863, an act was passed to establish a system of free schools, which embodied the bill of Mr. Ross, with numerous amendments and those sections of the Senate bill concerning the creation and duties of the board of school fund.

It is not the purpose of this study to go into detail about the steps leading up to the formation of the new state, but to understand the system under which schools were to operate, it is necessary to study the most important facts in the formation of the new educational plan. The problems to be met by the planners of this new system of education for West Virginia were many. Writing little more than two decades after these plans were made, Morgan and Cork⁹ gave this description of the process:

In accordance with an ordinance adopted on the 20th of August, 1861, by a convention of the people of 47 counties of Virginia now included in the territory of West Virginia, an election was held on the fourth Thursday in October ensuing for the purpose of ascertaining whether the people of those counties desired the formation of a new state and for the elec-

⁸ Acts of the West Virginia Legislature, 1863 (Wheeling: John Frew, Public Printer, 1863), pp. 261-62.

⁹ D. S. Morgan and J. F. Cork, History of Education in West Virginia (Charleston: House of Doubleday Company, 1882), pp. 127-30.

tion of delegates (if favorable) to assemble in Wheeling on the 26th of November next for the purpose of drafting a constitution for the new state.

Among the most distinguished members of this convention may be mentioned John Hill, President; Waitman T. Willey, Daniel Lamb, James H. Brown, Benjamin H. Smith, William E. Stevenson, Gordon Battelle, John A. Dille, John J. Brown, Thomas W. Harrison, Robert Trainer, and Peter G. Van Winkle. The majority of these men were from counties already strongly in favor of free public schools for all boys and girls, and it was only to be expected that they would support a plan carrying out that aim.

The committee on education was composed of: Gordon Battelle, of Ohio; William E. Stevenson, of Wood; Robert Hager, of Boone; Thomas H. Trainer, of Marshall; J. W. Parsons, of Tucker; William Walker, of Wyoming; and George Sheets, of Hampshire (counties).

One of the chief provisions provided for "An Invested or Irreducible School Fund"; for "the establishment and support of a thorough and efficient system of Free Schools"; for "the election of a General Superintendent of Free Schools"; for "a county superintendent for each county", and the "election of such other officers as should be necessary to render the system effective." Thus was formed in the organic law of the State, our Public School System.

The Senate and House of Delegates appointed committees on education on June 24, 1863. The two committees working jointly formed the first school law of West Virginia, which was passed on the tenth day of December of that year. The greater part of this act was made possible by the diligent work of Ross of the House Committee. Thus the school system of West Virginia had its origin and first years of development under this law.

In December, 1863, the Legislature of the State passed the act establishing the free school system. The Rev. W. R. White was named state superintendent in 1864. His vigorous campaign for good schools won for him the title, "The Horace Mann of West Virginia." Since that time progress has been made steadily in the improvement of our elementary schools. The academies gradually gave way to high schools, normal schools, and colleges.

No material alteration in the "district system" of schools occurred until 1933, when the old district lines were abolished and a "county-unit plan" instituted. The urbanization and industrialization of the state had so stimulated the flow of wealth to the cities that with the recent financial crisis it became necessary, if efficient schools were to be maintained, to broaden the area of administration and support and to increase materially the few cents per dollar in state aid. While as a state West Virginia does not rank high in the many surveys and indexes that have been published, the following data indicate that progress is being made.

In 1833 there were only 678 common free primary schools in the state, with only about 63 per cent of the 9,000 poor children attending them. Today there are approximately 75 per cent of the 530,000 children in school. In 1833 the total number of pupil days aggregated only 221,000, whereas today it exceeds 55,000,000. In 1833 each pupil averaged less than 40 days per year in school, whereas now, he averages in excess of 149. At that time there were only 45 academies offering for tuition an education on the secondary level as contrasted with our present extensive high school program.

The curricula of these academies were described in such terms as "language, painting, and drawing"; "Greek and Latin"; "the necessary branches of an English education". The common schools were properly called "Schools of the Three R's". The schools of secondary level were primarily college preparatory schools offering only one limited curriculum. A very few schools on the secondary level offered an English education designed for college preparation. Today the curricula compare favorably with that of the colleges in 1833. The elementary schools have expanded their curricula until they are equal in many ways to the better academies and some colleges in 1833. The forward look of the mountaineer is still the chief characteristic of the West Virginian in matters of education.

Many records of the early educational efforts are lost, but a few scattering ones seem to indicate an early interest in education in West Virginia. In 1727 Morgan Morgan built a cabin home near what is now Bunker Hill in Berkeley County, and in the same year a group of Germans from Pennsylvania

settled New Mecklenberg (Shepherdstown) in Jefferson County. If these colonists, or the many others who followed, brought educational facilities with them, they must have been meager and of the parental tutorial type. It is definitely known that a man named Shrock began teaching a school in his "cabin at Romney in 1753, two years before the French and Indian Wars."

One reference to education found in an old paper, dated August 12, 1775, listed among the Augusta records, gave the names of some citizens killed or taken prisoner by the Indians in the Greenbrier Section in the year 1755, and indicated "an old man, his wife and a *school master*, was killed."

A year before the first newspaper made its appearance west of the Blue Ridge, the *Alexandria Advertiser*, of June 22, 1786, carried an advertisement stating that the trustees of the "Winchester Latin, Greek, and English Schools having elected Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Potter, two gentlemen of character and ability, to take charge of the institution, we do hereby give notice that the schools will open on the first Monday in July." They also indicated that the "climate is healthful, the country plentiful, and the town growing." Lewis called this the "first classical school of the Lower Shenandoah Valley which opened its doors to the young men and women of what is now the eastern part of West Virginia."

The first schoolmaster in Preston County of whom there is definite knowledge was August Christain Whitehair, who was teaching at Carmel in 1790 and probably began teaching a year or two earlier. It is more than probable that by this time a school was maintained among the Quakers on the Big Sandy. Whether this is true of the people at Glade Farms and Whetzell's is less certain.¹⁰

The earliest available reference to education in Cabell County Schools was as follows:

Thomas A. Morris was born April 28, 1794, in Kanawha County, Virginia, five miles above Charleston on the west side of the Kanawha River. . . . When Thomas was ten years old, the family moved from this beautiful home to a place about

¹⁰ Owen F. Norton, *A History of Preston County, West Virginia* (Kingwood: The Journal Publishing Company, 1911), p. 126.

forty miles west, in Cabell County, on the state road leading to Kentucky. . . .

The means of education were very limited at that early day throughout the Western States and territories, and especially in the northwestern part of Virginia, where the Morris family resided. Teachers were few in number, and for the most part ill qualified for their work; nor were the most competent of them in very good demand, for many of the early settlers of that wild region cared little for books, so they could obtain plenty of fresh land, good range for their stock, and an abundance of game. Still there were schools; not continuing, however, longer than one quarter of the year, and that always in the Winter, when boys could best be spared from the farm. By such limited means, the children of that day, on the frontiers, obtained what little knowledge of books they possessed; nor was it generally deemed important that the course of studies be very extensive or thorough. To master Dilworth's Spelling Book, learn to read the New Testament, cypher to the "rule of three", and write a fair round hand, was regarded as quite an accomplished education, ample for all the practical purposes of life. This "curriculum" Thomas had passed through creditably by the time he reached his eighteenth year. About that time he became a member of the first grammar-class ever organized in Cabell County. It was taught by Mr. William Paine, a native of England, a thoroughly competent teacher, and an earnest Methodist. This worthy old gentleman, besides performing his professional duties, gave his pupils many sound moral lessons, and though gathered to his fathers long ago, his memory is cherished fondly by all his surviving students.¹¹

The first school in Wayne County of which we have any record was taught on Mill Creek in what is now Butler District about the year 1805, about one-half mile from where Cassville (Fort Gay) now stands, by Thomas Napier. Records showed that he was the first teacher in Wayne County.

A short time after teaching the school on Mill Creek, Napier taught a school on Tabor's Creek, which also later became part of Butler District. Another school in the same section was taught by John Deering on White's Creek at about the same time as the one on Mill Creek. In 1810, Stephen Bean held a school in a log cabin on Mill Creek.

The next section of Wayne County to have schools was that near the mouth of Twelve Pole Creek. According to tradition,

¹¹ John F. Mackay, *The Life of Rev. Thomas A. Morris, D.D.* (Cincinnati: Hitchcock and Wadsworth, 1872), pp. 11-12.

the first school taught near Ceredo was at Virginia Point near Twelve Pole in 1813, close to the residence of Stephen Kelly. The second in what is now Ceredo District appears to have been at Krout's Creek, almost midway between the town of Ceredo and the mouth of the Big Sandy River. This was taught by Charles Walker in the year 1823.¹²

The report of State Superintendent White to the governor in 1866 showed no schools nor houses for Wayne County in 1865.¹³ The first report sent to the state superintendent of free schools from Wayne County was for the year 1865-66 which reported seven houses completed and twenty under construction.

Of the earliest old field schools was one located at "Hell's Bend," a curve in the Little Kanawha River near Mineral Wells. This school was held in a log cabin built in 1805, and David Harris was one of the earliest teachers. Wolf, another early teacher, named the school and also the curve of the river where it was located.¹⁴ He taught writing and arithmetic by making letters and numbers on a wooden paddle with charcoal. Other early teachers in that school during the fifties and later included Mary Learny, Sebastian Chevoront, Joe Buckner, Toxana McKusick, and Amanda and Andrew Price.

One of Parkersburg's earliest teachers whose name has been preserved was the Reverend James McAboy who was responsible for the organization of both the Baptist and the Presbyterian Churches in Parkersburg. The minister lived in Parkersburg between 1817 and 1825 and taught a school in his home, a large two-story log house on Avery Street.¹⁵ The first school in Tyler County¹⁶ was held in Lincoln District about 1810. The first schoolhouse in Ellsworth District was opened around 1813, and was located on the property of a William Gregg.

The first school in what is now Union District, Kanawha County, was taught by James Rust in the year 1817 in a cabin

¹² *Encyclopaedia, Historical and Geographical Encyclopedia* (New York: H. H. Holt and Co., 1898), p. 288.

¹³ Cyril Wood, *The Development of Education in Wayne County, W. Va.* Unpublished Master Thesis, Marshall College, Huntington, W. Va., 1948, p. 20.

¹⁴ Louis E. Moore, *A History of Education in Kanawha County, W. Va.* Unpublished Master Thesis, Marshall College, Huntington, W. Va., 1945, p. 81.

¹⁵ Eliza S. Johnson, *Memorial Sketch of Parkersburg Baptist Church* (Parkersburg: Globe Printing and Binding Company, 1867), p. 13.

¹⁶ *Encyclopaedia, Op. cit.*, p. 288.

on Pocatalico River, eleven miles from its mouth. There were but five pupils in attendance. There were twenty-three schoolhouses in the district in 1863. About one-half were frame and the other half hewn logs.¹⁷

Tradition says that the first school ever taught on Coal River above its mouth was four miles above the falls by a man named Stanley, in the year 1816. About fifteen pupils were in attendance, receiving instruction under the old "Subscription Act." The house was a rude cabin, with "dirt" floor and a v-shaped chimney, which occupied one entire end of the building.¹⁸

The first school in Malden District appears to have been taught about the year 1820, by a gentleman named Ezra Walker, of Athens, Ohio. His successor was George Taylor. The building was a one-story frame, erected by General Lewis Ruffner, at his own expense. It was the first school building in the district.¹⁹

The first school in Calhoun County was taught by Robert Clifford in 1818 in a cave near Big Bend,²⁰ in what is now Sherman District. The first school teacher in Sherman District was a man by the name of Joseph Robinson, who taught a school as early as 1832, in a small log cabin with a huge mud and stick (cat and clay) chimney, a puncheon floor, but "it had no loft," meaning by this that it has no ceiling overhead.

On September 30, 1833, Nicholas County²¹ had seven school commissioners, and eighteen common primary schools which were attended by poor children. There were one hundred fifty poor children in the county, ninety-six of whom were sent to school.

A partial evaluation of the contributions of the free schools was made in 1871. Governor William E. Stevenson gave his opinion on the Free School System in his message to the legislature:

Since the establishment of popular education amongst us its growth has been steady and permanent, and it may now be regarded as a part of our fixed policy, and justly so, for whatever merit may be fairly claimed for other agencies designed to promote the public good free-school education, stripped of

¹⁷ Hist., p. 307.

¹⁸ Hist., p. 318.

¹⁹ Hist., p. 321.

²⁰ *West Virginia*, Co. III, p. 238.

²¹ James Murray Callahan, *Semi-Centennial History of West Virginia*, pp. 37; 238.

party politics, sectionalism, and sectarianism, is, and must continue to be, the chief element of our success, and a blow at it, whenever and by whomsoever made, will be aimed at the rights of the people and at the highest interests of the State.

The Civil War served as a great drawback to the establishment of free schools. The buildings were very inadequate, being mostly log structures and poorly furnished. Teachers during this period were poorly trained, salaries were low, and the length of the school term varied from two to three months, depending upon the wishes of the people in each community.

The textbooks used in the early schools differed according to the abilities of the subdistricts. The books²² in most common use in 1847 were the *Bible*, Pike's *Arithmetic*, the *Elementary Speller*, Murray's *Geography*, and Murray's *Grammar*.

The office of the State Superintendent of Schools published the following list of authorized books for 1867:

Reading, Spelling, and Elocution: McGuffey's *New Revised Readers*, McGuffey's *New Eclectic Spelling Book*, and Kidd's *Elocution and Vocal Culture*.

Mathematics: Ray's *Arithmetic*, Ray's *Test Examples*, Ray's *Elementary and Higher Algebra*, Evan's *School Geometry for Beginners*, Robinson's *New Geometry and Trigonometry*, Robinson's *Surveying and Navigation*, and Robinson's *Progressive Table Book*.

Grammar: Pinneo's *Primary and Analytical Grammar*, Pinneo's *English Teacher and Guide to Composition*, and Kears's *Treatise for High Schools*.

Geography: Mitchell's *New Revised Geography*, Cornell's *Outline Maps*, Guyot's *Physical Charts*, White's *Classbook on Geography for Examiners*, and Mary Howe Smith's *Lessons on the Globe*.

History, Natural Sciences, etc.: Goodrich's *Common School History*, Quackenboss' *History of the United States*, Quackenboss' *Natural Philosophy*, Ware and Smillie's *Philosophy of Natural History*, Quackenboss' *Rhetoric*, Youman's *Chemistry* (New Edition), Burritt's *Geography of the Heavens*, Robinson's *Astronomy*, Dana's *Geology*, Dana's *Mineralogy*, Gray's *Botany*, Cutter's *Anatomy and Physiology*, Spencer's *Penmanship*, and Webster's *Dictionary*.²³

²² *Annals*, Op. cit., p. 278.

²³ *Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Free Schools* (Charleston: 1867), p. 21.

A great deal of the instruction consisted of copy work and oral participation. Thus the need for texts was not as great as was the case when more individualized instruction became more pronounced. The importance of the common branches was keenly felt, and instruction was carried out accordingly. In most cases the teacher was chosen more for his ability to maintain order than for the excellence of his teaching methods.

One of these pioneer teachers was eulogized in *The Trapper*, and seems to have portrayed the time and the setting of the early school in general.²⁴

Ichabod Crane, lovable school master of the "Legend of Sleepy Hollow," was no more colorful in character than Tollison Shumate, a conscientious man who ever bore in mind that golden maxim, "Spare the rod and spoil the child." In truth, Tollison's scholars were not spoiled. A tailor by trade, he was meticulous in the matter of personal attire, and although short and fat, presented a very imposing appearance. His prize possession was a goose-quill pen that he used expertly, as is attested by the records of the early Baptist Church which were inscribed by him while acting as Church secretary. It seems that he emphasized writing throughout his teaching, the scholars using sourwood sticks to hold a pen point.

Lewis described "the West Virginia Schoolhouse of olden times" and the "Schoolmaster" as follows:²⁵

Down on the broad river bottom, in the valleys of smaller streams, or among the hills by a bubbling spring or rippling brook, a spot, in juxtaposition to a half dozen or more cabin homes was agreed upon by the heads of the families as a suitable place for a schoolhouse. It was an old "clearing" which tradition said was made by a man who was killed by the Indians, lost in the woods and never afterward heard of, or, tired of the wilderness, had gone back over "the Ridge"—the Blue Ridge.

There on the margin of that "improvement"—an "old field"—where a half dozen paths bisected, with primitive forests in the rear and the plant of wild grass and tangled weeds in front, these men—advance guard of civilization—reared the schoolhouse. Rude structure it was; in size, perhaps 16 x 18 feet; the walls built of logs; sometimes hewn, but usually round, and from eight to twelve inches in diameter—the interstices chink-

²⁴ Ella Stone Leung, *Adrian, The Trapper*, Trap Hill High School Year Book, 1908, p. 21.

²⁵ *The History of Education in West Virginia, 1807*, State Department of Education, p. 26.

ed with sticks and stones and daubed with clay; the roof of clapboards held in place by heavy weight poles; the door of slabs hung on wooden hinges; the floor, if any, was made of puncheons split from the body of a large tree and hewn so as to have somewhat the quality of smoothness; a fire place, ample as that of an ancient baron, spanned over half of one end of the building and was surmounted by a "cat-and-clay" chimney not unlike a tall partridge trap, ever tottering to its fall. Logs ten inches in diameter, split in halves, and pins or legs inserted in the oval sides, answered for seats. Along the side of the wall pins were inserted and on them rested a slab, sloping downward, used as a writing desk; just above it, a log was chopped out and in its place a long framework resembling sash for holding a single row of panes of glass in the absence of which greased paper was sometimes pasted to admit the light. . . .

Autumn came. A stranger appeared upon the scenes and the report went from cabin to cabin that there was a school-master in the neighborhood. Look at him. He is clad in the garb of the boarder. Whence he came, none knew. He brings no credentials or diploma from a college faculty, for none is required. It is only necessary that he teach the three "R's"—reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic. He binds himself to do this in his 'article' which he carries from house to house, soliciting subscriptions to the school which he is to 'keep' for so much a 'quarter' and 'board 'round'—that is with his pupils. Then he goes to the school commissioner of the section of the district, who, in compliance with the law of '96 (1796) or '46 (1846) enters into contract to pay from his quota of the Literary Fund, tuition of the indigent children of the neighborhood. Then the day is announced for school to begin and it is understood that the 'master' will board the first week at John Smith's but none can divine where he will stay the next.

Monday morning comes. The 'master' goes early and with the aid of one of Smith's boys, puts on a 'backlog' and soon a fire is roaring on the hearth. Then the boys and girls for a half dozen miles around begin to arrive. . . .

West Virginia was a land of academies. Its distance from the English influence of Old Virginia made inaccessible the benefits of the Latin grammar schools of Old England and William and Mary College of Old Virginia. The mountains settled the question of education, for if the pioneer was to secure for his children such benefits he must establish his own schools. A lackadaisical attitude among the residents of Old Virginia and the presence in our midst of settlers from Pennsylvania

led the mountaineers to copy the academy movement inaugurated by Franklin in 1751. West Virginia should be definitely classed among the Middle Atlantic states in this matter.

Lewis²⁶ stated that

By far the most important, the most potent factors in early educational work in West Virginia were the many academies which, as chartered institutions, were scattered over the State, and whose management and control were in the hands of the foremost men of the community. . . .

There must have been many such schools which failed to leave any record and were operated without the formality of incorporation, because on December 3, 1787, the Reverend Robert Stubbs made affidavits that he witnessed the test trial of James Rumsey's steamboat on the Potomac. He subscribed himself as "teacher of the Academy at Shepherdstown." The articles of incorporation for the Shepherdstown Academy were dated January 3, 1814. This of course may have been a second school operated there, or the first school may have been tardy in incorporating, but it gives evidence that academies in this state were founded much earlier than the articles of incorporation indicated. Brooke Academy at Wellsburg in Brooke County was incorporated on January 10, 1797, twenty years after it had begun active educational work. Academies in West Virginia antedate the Revolutionary War, which places them early in the history of the academy movement. Brooke Academy was the earliest institution of higher learning on the Ohio River south of Pittsburgh.

Another institution of higher learning west of the Allegheny Mountains for which records are available was the Randolph Academy, located at Clarksburg in Harrison County, incorporated on December 11, 1787. Its first board of trustees consisted of twenty-eight people, among whom were such men as Edmund Randolph, Benjamin Harrison, George Mason, and Patrick Henry. Its establishment resulted in a diversion of one-eighth of the surveyor's fees for Harrison, Monongalia, Ohio, and Randolph Counties from William and Mary College to this school. The act declared that the school was established for the benefit of the people of these four counties, which at

²⁶ *The History of Education in West Virginia, 1907*. State Department of Education, p. 26.

that time was all of (West) Virginia north of the Little Kanawha River. A graduate of Oxford, England, George Gowers, served as its first principal and taught Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and sciences for twenty years. For the years 1830-1840, one of its teachers was Francis H. Pierpont, who later became Governor of Virginia under the Reorganized Government.

After a varied and useful career many of these schools merged with others until their identity became lost in records and tradition. After serving the state for over half a century, Brooke Academy in 1852 merged with Meade Collegiate Institute, which had been originally incorporated "at or near Parkersburg" on March 21, 1851. The Mount Carmel School, which had been established at West Union in Monongalia (now Preston) County after serving the state for forty-eight years, lost its building by fire and moved to an unknown locality. The Lancasterian Academy at Wheeling, Ohio County, was incorporated on October 10, 1814, but later became the Linsly Institute.

Under the leadership of Superintendent White, the Normal School was established for the training of teachers. He said to the Legislature that "it would be better to suspend the schools of the State for two years and donate the entire school revenue for that time to the establishment and endowment of a State Normal School than to have none." His efforts were rewarded by the conversion of the old Marshall Academy, founded in 1837, into a training institution. The history of the college began in 1837, just two years after the death of Chief Justice John Marshall. It was located two miles west of the mouth of the Guyan River and approximately two blocks south of the Ohio River. It was a small log building which was used as a "meeting house" for church services and was first called Mount Hebron. The interests of the citizens of the county later led to the erection of a new brick building, two stories high, and containing four rooms.

George Summers proposed that the new academy be named after "the greatest legal mind the grand old commonwealth of Virginia ever produced—Chief Justice John Marshall." His proposal met with unanimous approval. A petition was drawn up and sent to the Virginia General Assembly asking for a charter which was granted on March 24, 1838. The school was

officially named Marshall Academy. In June of that same year James Holderby conveyed to the trustees in consideration of \$40.00, one and a quarter acres of land on which the school had just been built.

For many years it "was the most famous institution of higher learning in Western Virginia." In 1858 the name was changed to Marshall College. In 1867 the authorities of Cabell County gave property valued at \$10,000 to the state for a location for a state Normal School. The name Marshall College was retained by legislative enactment. Between 1867 and 1871 five branches of this school were formed at Fairmont, Shepherdstown, Concord Church (now Athens), West Liberty, and Glenville. Some of these branches of Marshall College represented former academies which had been taken over by the state. For example, Fairmont was the seat of a private normal school founded in the summer of 1865 by J. N. Boyd and Dr. Dennis B. Dorsey which later became Fairmont State College. In 1838 the Reverend Nathan S. Shotwell established a school at West Liberty called West Liberty Academy which in 1870 became a Branch Normal. A classical and scientific school called Shepherds College was incorporated January 12, 1872, which on February 27, 1872, was taken over by the state under the name of State Normal School. Each of these five branches has since been organized as State Colleges and are no longer considered branches of Marshall College.

On October 3, 1863, the State Legislature passed an act providing for West Virginia Agriculture College to be established within five years. January 8, 1866, Monongalia Academy which was incorporated November 29, 1814, offered the State all its property, including that of Woodburn Female Seminary which had been incorporated January 4, 1858, and valued at \$51,000 on condition the Agriculture College be located in or near Morgantown. Monongalia Academy was said to be the most flourishing institution of learning in that section.

On February 7, 1867, the Legislature accepted the donation and established the college and on October 4, 1868, the name was changed to the West Virginia University by the State Legislature. From these sources dating back to 1814, modest though they were, we had the beginning of the state university which strives to serve the needs of the commonwealth.

The transfer and merger of these older schools often favored the less fortunate people. This is true especially of Romney Classical Institute, which was incorporated in Romney, Hampshire County, in 1824, and was transferred in 1870 to state operation as a school for the Deaf and Blind.

That the academies became the model for other schools is evident. Storer College, an institution of learning for Negroes in the state, probably should be listed in the academy movement, although its founding followed the dates of this movement. The Reverend Mr. Nathan C. Brackett, graduate of Dartmouth and attached to Sheridan's Army, with the help of many people, among whom was John Storer of Sanford, Maine, who gave \$10,000 for the founding of a school for colored people; and with the cooperation of Congress through the influence of General James A. Garfield in the House and William Pitt Fessenden in the Senate the work of Storer College began on October 2, 1867. It has done a notable work among the colored people of the state.

Many of these academies remained private institutions until they disappeared under the onslaught of the high-school movement or were elevated to colleges of full or junior standing. Among these is Bethany College, which was incorporated as such in 1840 by Alexander Campbell, of Wheeling, founder of the Christian Church. The first session of the college opened in the fall of 1841. But before this, as early as 1818, there had been operated a school called Buffalo Seminary, "which had served to sharpen the cherished purpose and desire of Campbell."

Through an unhappy and regrettable misunderstanding in 1844, a division among Methodists developed and the Methodist Academy at Clarksburg failed. After 40 years a revival of interest in higher education among the Methodists led to the founding of West Virginia Wesleyan College at Buckhannon, which received its first students on September 3, 1890. Morris Harvey, operated by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, opened its doors for students in September 1888 at Barboursville. After years of service it moved to Charleston. Greenbrier College, West Virginia's only college strictly for women, was founded as Lewisburg Female Seminary in 1812.

One is naturally inclined to believe that the pioneer urge for learning which caused academies to spring up in a wilderness would transfer itself to higher forms of education as the public high-school movement gained headway at the expense of the former. If this is true Salem, Davis and Elkins, and Broaddus, as well as numerous colleges which have ceased to operate, may have been an outgrowth of the academy movement.

A complete history of West Virginia Academies will never be written because many are lost among the vagaries of pioneer records and traditions. A partial list of West Virginia academies with their place and date of founding is given by Lewis,²⁷ and is attached here as evidence of the wide-spread interest in this movement.

1. The Academy of Shepherdstown, at Shepherdstown, in Jefferson County, incorporated in 17—.
2. The Randolph Academy, at Clarksburg, in Harrison County, incorporated December 11, 1787.
3. The Charles Town Academy, at Charles Town, in Jefferson County, incorporated December 25, 1797.
4. The Brooke Academy, at Wellsburg, in Brooke County, incorporated January 10, 1797.
5. The Mount Carmel School, at West Union, in Preston County (then Monongalia), established in 1801.
6. The Lewisburg Academy, at Lewisburg, in Greenbrier County, incorporated in 1812.
7. The Shepherdstown Academy, at Shepherdstown, in Jefferson County, incorporated January 3, 1814.
8. The Romney Academy, at Romney, in Hampshire County, incorporated February 11, 1814.
9. The Lancasterian Academy, at Wheeling, in Ohio County, incorporated October 10, 1814.
10. The Monongalia Academy, at Morgantown, in Monongalia County, incorporated November 29, 1814.
11. The Mercer Academy, in Charleston, Kanawha County, incorporated November 29, 1818.
12. The Union Academy, at Union, in Monroe County, incorporated January 27, 1820.
13. The Martinsburg Academy, at Martinsburg, in Berkeley County, incorporated January 28, 1822.

²⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 232.

14. The Romney Classical Institute, at Romney, in Hampshire County, established in 1824.
15. The Tyler Academy, at Middlebourne, in Tyler County, incorporated January 30, 1827.
16. The Wheeling Academy, at Wheeling, in Ohio County, incorporated February 21, 1827.
17. The Romney Academy, at Romney, in Hampshire County, incorporated March 25, 1829.
18. The Morgantown Female Seminary, at Morgantown, in Monongalia County, incorporated March 25, 1831.
19. The Seymour Academy, at Moorefield, in Hardy County, incorporated February 16, 1832.
20. The Bolivar Academy, at Bolivar, in Jefferson County, incorporated February 16, 1832.
21. The Red Sulphur Seminary, at Red Sulphur Springs, in Monroe County, opened April 15, 1832.
22. The Charles Town Female Academy, at Charles Town, in Jefferson County, incorporated March 15, 1826.
23. The Brickhead and Wells Academy, at Sistersville, in Tyler County, incorporated January 18, 1837.
24. The West Liberty Academy, at West Liberty, in Ohio County, incorporated March 20, 1837.
25. The Marshall Academy, at Guyandotte (now Huntington), in Cabell County, incorporated March 13, 1838.
26. The Western Virginia Education Society, at Pruntytown, in Taylor County (then Harrison), incorporated March 28, 1838.
27. The Parkersburg Academy Association, at Parkersburg, in Wood County, incorporated April 5, 1838.
28. The Morgantown Female Academy, at Morgantown, in Monongalia County, incorporated January 30, 1839.
29. The Cove Academy, at Holliday's Cove, in Hancock County (then Brooke), incorporated April 6, 1839.
30. The Bethany College, at Bethany, in Brooke County, incorporated in the autumn of 1840.
31. The Preston Academy, at Kingwood, in Preston County, incorporated January 2, 1841.
32. The Huntersville Academy, at Huntersville, in Pocahontas County, incorporated January 15, 1842.
33. The Ashbury Academy, at Parkersburg, in Wood County, incorporated February 2, 1842.

34. The Little Levels Academy, at Hillsboro, in Pocahontas County, incorporated February 14, 1842.
35. The Rector College, at Pruntytown, in Taylor County, incorporated February 14, 1842.
36. The Greenbank Academy, at Greenbank, in Pocahontas County, incorporated March 26, 1842.
37. The Northwestern Academy, at Clarksburg, in Harrison County, incorporated March 26, 1842.
38. The Brandonville Academy, at Brandonville, in Preston County, incorporated March 27, 1843.
39. The Weston Academy, at Weston, in Lewis County, incorporated January 18, 1844.
40. The Potomac Seminary, at Romney, in Hampshire County, incorporated December 12, 1846.
41. The Male and Female Academy at Buckhannon, in Upshur County (then Lewis), incorporated February 1, 1847.
42. The Lewis County Seminary, at Weston, in Lewis County, incorporated March 20, 1847.
43. The Marshall Academy, at Moundsville, in Marshall County, incorporated March 19, 1847.
44. The Wheeling Female Seminary, at Wheeling, in Ohio County, incorporated January 24, 1848.
45. The Buffalo Academy, at Buffalo, in Putnam County, incorporated March 16, 1849.
46. The Academy of the Visitation, at Wheeling, in Ohio County, incorporated March 14, 1850.
47. The Jane Lew Academy, at Jane Lew, in Lewis County, incorporated March 16, 1850.
48. The Wellsburg Female Academy, at Wellsburg, in Brooke County, incorporated March 17, 1851.
49. The Meade Collegiate Institute, at or near Parkersburg, incorporated March 21, 1851.
50. The South Branch Academical Institute, at Moorefield, in Hardy County, incorporated March 31, 1851.
51. The Fairmont Academy, at Fairmont, in Marion County, incorporated February 17, 1852.
52. The Wheeling Female Seminary, at Wheeling, in Ohio County, incorporated April 12, 1852.
53. The West Union Academy, at West Union, in Doddridge County, incorporated April 16, 1852.

54. The Morgan Academy, at Berkeley Springs, in Morgan County, incorporated January 10, 1853.
55. The Logan Institute, at Logan Court House, in Logan County, incorporated February 21, 1853.
56. The Ashton Academy, at Mercer's Bottom, in Mason County, incorporated January 7, 1856.
57. The Point Pleasant Academy, at Point Pleasant, in Mason County, incorporated February 26, 1856.
58. The Polytechnic College, at Aracoma, in Logan County, incorporated February 28, 1856.
59. The Fairmont Male and Female Seminary, at Fairmont, in Marion County, incorporated March 12, 1856.
60. The Harper's Ferry Female Institute, at Harper's Ferry, in Jefferson County, incorporated March 18, 1856.
61. The Woodburn Female Seminary, at Morgantown, in Monongalia County, incorporated January 4, 1858.
62. The Lewisburg Female Institute, at Lewisburg, in Greenbrier County, incorporated April 7, 1858.
63. The Levelton Male and Female College, at Hillsboro, in Pocahontas County, incorporated February 27, 1860.
64. The Union College, at Union, in Monroe County, incorporated March 28, 1860.
65. The Parkersburg Classical and Scientific Institute, at Parkersburg, in Wood County, incorporated March 18, 1861.

There is some evidence that these private schools shared in the distribution of the Literary Fund. F. B. Lambert, former superintendent of schools of Barboursville, West Virginia, has in his possession the original records of the school commissioners serving in the area of Cabell County. The book cover gave 1819 as the date of its beginning. Under the date of June 1838 may be found this entry:²⁸

At a special meeting of the school comrs of Cabell County held at the county court house of Cabell County on the 25th day of June 1838 . . . ordered that the surplus revenues of the literary fund for the county of Cabell for the year 1838 and each year thereafter which by the act passed March 22d, 1838, was added to the fund granted to the primary schools be applied to Marshall academy in said county of Cabell and that the auditor of the literary fund pay the same over to the order of the treasurer of Marshall academy in said county.

(Signed by) William Buffington, Trust

²⁸A photostatic copy of these minutes may be found at Marshall College.

There seemed some question of the propriety of this grant, and a few years later we find the entry which might indicate the funds were granted for only a short time. In the above mentioned book the following entry can be found:

At a board of School Commissioners held at the court house of Cabell County on the 25th day of October 1841, being court day for said county . . . ordered that the school commissioners of Cabell County be notified to meet at the court house on the first day of the November Court next to take into consideration the propriety of withdrawing the surplus revenue from the Marshall academy. . . .

(Signed by) William Love, President
John Samuels, Clerk

The last minutes found concerning this transaction read as follows:

At a meeting of the School Commissioners of Cabell County on Monday the 22d of Nov. 1841. . . . It was ordered by the board that the sum of sixty seven dollars and twenty seven cents be hereafter withdrawn from the amount of the surplus portion of the literary fund now appropriated to the Marshall academy and that the clerk of this board transmit a certified copy of this order to the superintendent of the literary fund. . . .

(Signed by) William Buffington, President

A marginal note stated it had been "copied and sent to Marshall Academy."

Thus has grown West Virginia's education system. From humble-pioneer beginnings has grown a system of education for all children starting with the first grade and extending through a system of accessible State Colleges and University. It will be interesting to see what developments the future will bring.